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The effect of the recession on the quality of working life of UK managers: an empirical study

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Abstract: This paper explores the effect of the post-2007 recession on UK managers using a unique data set derived from the Quality of Working Life Project. This project has been running since 1997 in partnership with UK's Chartered Management Institute. The paper compares a wide range of measures from surveys run in 2007 (immediately before the 'credit crunch') and in 2012 as the UK was slowly emerging from the recession. Data from the surveys are used to examine the extent, pace and nature of organisational change, to assess the effect of change on managers' views of their organisation as a place to work and to assess the effect of changing patterns of work on their physical and psychological well-being and their working hours. The paper reveals that the effect of change has overwhelmingly been seen as negative with declining levels of job satisfaction, work intensification and growing levels of ill health.

Keywords: organisational change; well-being; working hours; employee engagement; work intensification.

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Biographical notes: Les Worrall is a Professor of Strategic Analysis in the Faculty of Business, Environment and Society at Coventry University. He is a Fellow of the Chartered Management Institute. His research interests include organisational analysis, leadership and changing patterns of work. He has been working with the Chartered Management Institute and Prof. Cary Cooper of Lancaster University on the Quality of Working Life project since 1997. He has also conducted comparative work on the Quality of Working Life with the Australian Institute of Management and colleagues at Monash University in Melbourne, Australia, and Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

L. Worrall and C.L. Cooper

Cary L. Cooper is a Distinguished Professor of Organisational Psychology and Health at Lancaster University Management School. He is the author/editor of over 120 books (on occupational stress, women at work and industrial and organisational psychology), has written over 400 scholarly articles for academic journals and is a frequent contributor to national newspapers, TV and radio. He is founding editor of the *Journal of Organizational Behaviour*, founding editor of the *International Journal of Management Reviews* and currently Editor-in-Chief of the medical journal *Stress & Health*. In 2001, he was awarded a CBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours List for his contribution to occupational safety and health.

1 Introduction

The Quality of Working Life surveys have been taking place since 1997 (Worrall and Cooper, 1997). This series of surveys has allowed us to examine how the world of work for UK managers has been changing. More specifically, the studies have allowed us to assess how changes in the macro-economy have impacted on the pace and nature of organisational change, on managers' health and well-being, on working hours and on many of the key dimensions of managerial work. Before we conducted the 2012 survey (Worrall and Cooper, 2012), our last survey had been conducted in 2007 (Worrall and Cooper, 2007a). Since 2007, the UK economy has suffered the deepest and most protracted recession since the 1930s. In his 2007 budget statement, the then UK Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown, commented "And we will never return to the old boom and bust" – never has a politician been so wrong. Within a year of this statement being made, UK's biggest boom was to become its biggest bust. At the time the 2012 survey was conducted, UK's inflation-adjusted GDP had dropped 4% since the publication of our last report in October 2007; a major UK bank had been effectively nationalised; several well-known financial institutions had disappeared completely and many companies that had been household names in the UK in 2007 had gone into liquidation.

Since the financial crisis of 2008–2009, the UK has suffered two recessionary periods, with some pundits suggesting that the pace of economic growth is so slow that UK's GDP will not return to its end-2007 level until 2015 – perhaps even longer. As the credit crunch of 2008–2009 has been superseded by the Euro crisis, the UK government has seen austerity as the only salvation. While few can doubt the wisdom of reducing the size of UK's structural deficit, many are now voicing concerns about the short- and long-term consequences of the absence of growth and the absence of policies to promote growth in the UK economy. Even business organisations such as the British Chambers of Commerce and the Confederation of British Industry have raised concerns about the lack of government support for business growth (O'Connor, 2012). Pundits (e.g. Philpott, 2012) are predicting that UK managers will face increased work intensity, longer hours and high levels of job insecurity as levels of trust in the workplace decline. These assertions are completely consistent with our findings.

Attempts to reduce government debt have led to reductions in government spending which have rippled through the public sector and into the private sector. Somewhat paradoxically, UK unemployment is declining as the economy is failing to grow, but

The effect of the recession on the quality of working life

uncertainty about the economy, wage restraint, households trying to reduce debt and relatively high inflation compared to earnings growth have all combined to reduce demand not only on the High Street but also in the wider economy. The finance sector, which was once seen as the growth engine of the UK, has seen massive job losses and the manufacturing sector, while showing some signs of growth, is finding growth difficult due to depressed demand from a Europe whose currency is in a state of turmoil and from a world economy that is not growing anywhere near as fast as it used to (Weinberg and Cooper, 2012).

Given the scale and impact of these changes since 2007, running a survey in 2012 provided us with the opportunity to explore how managers' perceptions of the impact of change within their organisations had affected their sense of well-being, motivation and productivity. We could also assess how these difficult economic conditions had impacted upon the hours managers worked, on managers' physical and psychological health and on managers' satisfaction not only with their jobs but also with their organisation as a place to work. Essentially, having data for 2007 and 2012 has allowed us to compare managers' perceptions of how several critical dimensions of the quality of their working lives had changed. Where possible, we were also able to use data from our earlier surveys going back to 1997 to look for longer term trends and, in some cases, breaks of trend. The methodology used in the 2012 and previous surveys is outlined in Appendix A.

The period from 2007 to 2012 has been marked by a radical transition from what economists called 'NICE' (Non-Inflationary Continuous Expansion) to what they now label 'DRAG' (Deficit Reduction Anaemic Growth). As a consequence of this shift, organisations have had to change their business strategies to respond to changing market conditions. In the public sector, central government's austerity agenda has led to significant reductions in government spending and to the privatisation of public services as well as significant job losses. In order to survive, organisations have had to change, but what were the consequences of change for the survivors of that change? More importantly, we are concerned that successful management of change is crucial to any organisation if it is to survive in what we have shown to be a turbulent and difficult business environment. We are concerned, to quote Todnem By (2005, p.369) that many of the "theories and approaches to change management currently available to academics and practitioners are often contradictory, mostly lacking empirical evidence and supported by unchallenged hypotheses concerning the nature of contemporary organisational change management". The primary purpose of this paper is to provide empirical evidence of the impact of change as change is currently being enacted in UK business organisations. Our secondary aim is to provide an empirically sound base for, first, informing practitioners of the consequences of their actions and, second, for informing the academic debate about change management and its implementation. These, then, are the key aims that our paper seeks to address. While there is much 'anecdotal evidence' that the effect of change on managers and employees is generally negative, our studies have enabled us to generate robust time series evidence to explore in detail how change has affected managers' sense of well-being.

Our objectives in this paper are, first, to quantify business growth and decline before exploring the scale of change and, second, to explore the impact of change on managers' sense of well-being on a number of dimensions. The paper has five main sections. In Section 2, we look at patterns of business growth and decline, and assess how they have changed before continuing, in Section 3, to explore the scale and nature of organisational

change and to assess managers' perceptions of the effects of that change. In Section 4, we explore how managers' perceptions of their organisation as a place to work have changed, examining issues such as job satisfaction. In Section 5, we look more closely at managers' well-being by exploring how recent changes have impacted upon managers' propensity to report aspects of physical and psychological ill health. In Section 6, we will look at how working hours have changed and explore the impact of working long hours on managers' sense of well-being and health. While painting a statistical picture is important, our aim is to transcend the descriptive as one of our key objectives is to produce insights that will stimulate debate and critical reflection among those responsible for designing and implementing change programmes. In our paper, we raise concerns about how effectively change is being managed in many UK organisations.

2 Changing patterns in organisational growth and decline: the trigger for organisational change

The direct and indirect impacts of the recession that was triggered by the Lehman collapse have been profound on many business organisations in the UK (Bowles and Cooper, 2012). As a context setting exercise, we opened both the 2007 and 2012 questionnaires by asking managers if they felt that the economic environment in which their organisation was operating was growing, declining or stable. We also asked them if they felt their organisation was growing, declining or stable. Our analysis revealed that there had been a marked change for the worse in organisations' economic health and operating conditions since 2007. The percentage of businesses that were growing declined from 53% in 2007 to 34% in 2012. Slightly more businesses claimed to be stable in 2012 (42% compared to 36% in 2007), but the percentage of businesses that were in decline increased from 21% to 34%. There were particularly marked differences between the public and private sectors: while 47% of public sector organisations were in decline, only 19% of private sector organisations were in decline and while 44% of private sector organisations were growing, only 15% of public sector organisations were growing. In 2012, 44% of private sector organisations were growing compared to 60% in 2007.

The analysis revealed that business conditions were markedly worse in 2007 than they were in 2012: fewer organisations were growing in 2012 than in 2007 and significant differences were identified between the public and private sectors. In 2012, while there had been some growth in the private sector, 47% of public sector respondents said their organisation was declining. Given the economic turmoil the UK has experienced since 2007, increasingly difficult business conditions and the decline in business growth, it is not surprising that most organisations had engaged with some form of organisational change. Even in organisations that were growing, cost-cutting to retain competitiveness in harsher economic conditions was still evident. Not surprisingly, tougher business conditions had forced most organisations to engage with radical cost-cutting. The prime driver of organisational change since 2007 has been cost reduction often enacted through the delivery mechanisms of compulsory and voluntary redundancy, worsened terms and conditions and delayering.

As in 2007, change was an extremely common experience for managers, with over 92% of managers in 2012 experiencing at least one form of change over the last year. Managers in the public sector were more likely to have experienced change (98%) than

The effect of the recession on the quality of working life

those in the private sector (86%). Across all sectors, organisational restructuring (often involving delayering) and cost reduction (often involving redundancy) were the most often cited forms of change. In 2012, 82% of respondents cited cost reduction as a driver of change, which is a marked increase over the 60% recorded in 2007. The forms of organisational change reported by managers varied by type of organisation, with managers in the public sector recording the highest incidence of change on almost all our measures. Managers in the public sector were most likely to cite having experienced cost reduction (91%), organisational restructuring (91%), voluntary redundancy (78%), changed terms and conditions (61%), culture change (57%), compulsory redundancy (47%) and delayering (39%). The use of voluntary redundancy and changing employees' terms and conditions (especially pension entitlements) were particularly prevalent in the public sector.

In all the surveys we have conducted since 1997, we have found, first, that organisational change has had a major impact on managers' perceptions of their organisation as a place to work and, second, we have found that change has been focused primarily on reducing costs and, in particular, on making more intensive use of organisations' human assets (Worrall and Cooper, 2008). To use the management jargon, much organisational change has focused on 'making the assets sweat', particularly human assets. Essentially, we have found that these changes have had the effect of intensifying and extensifying managerial work by creating an environment where managers have felt it necessary to work harder, faster and longer.

3 The effects of organisational change on managers' views of their organisation

Managers who had undergone organisational change were asked to say what effect they thought change had had on their organisation. As in 2007, managers' views of the effect of organisational change were overwhelmingly negative: in 2012, 68% reported a decreased sense of job security; 57% reported reduced loyalty to their organisation; 70% reported reduced morale; and 64% reported reduced motivation. In 53% of cases, managers claimed that organisational change had reduced their sense of well-being at work.

Views about the impact of organisational change were most benign at the director level, with perceptions of the effect of change deteriorating as managers became less senior (see Table 1). For example, while 37% of directors felt that change had decreased morale in their organisation, this increased to 57% of senior managers and 65% of middle managers before peaking at 82% of junior managers. While 31% of directors felt that organisational change had impacted negatively on their well-being, this reached 63% for junior managers. In all the surveys we have conducted since 1997, we have found a significant disparity between the views of directors and all the other managers. In our 2012 study, we were disconcerted to find that the difference between directors and all the other grades of manager had widened on almost all of our measures. The perceptions gap between those at the apex of the organisational pyramid and those at its base had noticeably widened.

Table 1 The effect of organisational change on managers' views by level in the hierarchy

	<i>Director</i>	<i>Senior manager</i>	<i>Middle manager</i>	<i>Junior manager</i>
Loyalty to the organisation has decreased	29	57	61	66
Morale has decreased	37	68	75	82
Motivation has decreased	32	57	65	76
Sense of job security has decreased	47	69	71	72
Sense of well-being has decreased	31	54	55	63

In 2012, managers were strongly of the view that the effect of organisational change had been to accentuate the pressure on them to work harder (78%), to increase the volume of work they had to do (76%), to increase the pace of work (66%) and to increase the pressure they were under to work longer hours (61%). Put more simply, and to support the findings of earlier researchers such as Konzelmann et al. (2007), the effect of change had resulted in both work intensification (the pressure to work harder, to work faster and to do more work) and work extensification (the pressure to work longer hours – an issue we discuss in a later section of this paper). Junior managers were most likely to feel that they now had less control over how they did their jobs: while 22% of the directors reported that the effect of organisational change had been to reduce their level of task discretion, this increased to 34% for senior managers and 40% for middle managers before peaking at 48% for junior managers. These changes are interesting in that they imply that there have been significant changes to the managerial labour process, particularly to managers at lower levels of the organisational hierarchy. These findings are consistent with those of authors such as Burchell et al. (2002) and Felstead et al. (2004).

In a world where the organisational rhetoric often focuses on employee engagement (Shuck and Wollard, 2010) and empowerment (Chiles and Zorn, 1995), recent trends seem to be pushing in the opposite direction with managers feeling that their levels of task discretion are declining as performance management regimes become more pervasive and intrusive (Bowles and Cooper, 2012; Mather et al., 2009). In addition, other research we have conducted reveals that the prevailing leadership styles in UK business organisations (which are overwhelmingly seen as authoritarian, bureaucratic and reactive) are styles which do much to undermine employee engagement (Worrall and Cooper, 2013). Additionally, international comparative work we have also done (Lindorff et al., 2008) shows that UK top managers' behavioural styles compare unfavourably with those in Australia where top managers' leadership styles are more likely to be seen as open, accessible and empowering.

Managers who had undergone organisational change were asked what effect they thought change had had on their organisation as a whole. Of particular concern here is an issue that we have been raising since we began this research in 1997: our respondents' prime concerns were that organisational change had resulted in their organisation losing key skills and experience through the heavy emphasis on cost reduction often delivered through redundancy and delayering. In many cases, 'expensive' staff who were at the top of their grades were being systematically replaced by cheaper, less experienced workers or by agency staff. The degree of concern about the haemorrhaging of experienced staff has increased. In our first study in 1997, only 45% of those affected by organisational

The effect of the recession on the quality of working life

change thought that key skills and experience had been lost – by 2012, this had risen to over 61%. In an era when ‘talent management’ is being seen as an important driver of business performance, it is worrying that more than 61% of those who have experienced organisation change feel that change resulted in their organisation losing key skills, knowledge and experience.

One of the more positive outcomes of change is that change tends to sharpen accountability, but fewer respondents agreed with this statement in 2012 than in 2007 (41% in 2012 compared to 46% in 2007). In 1997, 63% felt that the effect of organisational change had been to sharpen accountability. An examination of our 2012 measures against the 1997 scores on the same items leaves one with the impression that organisational change has become a much blunter instrument over the last 15 years perhaps because it has become far more intensely focused on taking out costs irrespective of the impact that this has on the organisation and the employees who survive the change and have to live with its consequences.

While organisational change is often sold to employees using the rhetoric of increased flexibility, improved employee participation and improved productivity and profitability, only a minority of employees seems to be convinced that change has had these effects, with many of ‘the convinced’ being directors. The majority of respondents were not positive about the effects of change: for example, 54% did not think that decision-making had become faster and 45% did not think that flexibility had increased. While the collective view was that organisational change seemed not to have had much, if any, positive effect, directors’ views were far more positive than those of persons at any other level of management. While 43% of the directors thought that organisational change had led to improved flexibility, this declined to only 17% in case of junior managers. Directors were also less likely to be of the view that key skills and experience had been lost (29% compared to over 65% of senior, middle and junior managers).

It is abundantly clear that the effect of organisational change has, as in all our previous studies, not been seen positively, except by directors. Overall, organisational change, especially if you were a junior manager, was felt to have had very negative effects on employees’ morale, loyalty, motivation and psychological well-being. More importantly, given that the majority of change was predicated on driving down costs, the main effect of change has been to force workers to intensify and extensify their work effort in that they now feel under increased pressure to work harder, faster and longer with less task discretion and with less control over how they do their jobs and the pace at which they have to work (Reed, 2011). The rhetoric of employee engagement and empowerment (Chiles and Zorn, 1995) and the reality of managers’ working lives seem to be two completely different things (Bowles and Cooper, 2009; Harter et al., 2002; Shuck and Herd, 2012).

Since we began our research in 1997, we have commented critically on the width of the gap between the views of directors and those of other managers, especially junior managers. While we expect that an employee’s view of the organisation as a place to work and their view of the effects of change will vary according to where they sit in the managerial hierarchy, we have never failed to be amazed at how different the views of directors and other managers are. This year, we have become even more concerned about this issue as we feel that the gap between the perceptions of those at the base of the pyramid and those at the apex has become even more extreme. We regard the width of the gap as unhealthy and we regard the persistent widening of the gap to be an even more unhealthy outcome and something that is not in the long-term interest of UK businesses

or the UK economy. We reiterate what we said in 2007: “It would appear that directors are becoming even more distant from the (day-to-day) reality of the organisations that they are attempting to lead” (Worrall and Cooper, 2007a, p.66).

Just as there were marked differences between the views of managers at different levels of the organisation, there were also marked differences between types of organisation. Managers in the public sector were noticeably more negative about the impact of change than those in other types of organisation. For example, while 86% of managers in the public sector (80% in 2007) said that change had negatively affected their morale, the equivalent figure in the private sector was 55%. Our analysis (shown in Table 2) revealed that managers in the public sector were much more negative about the effects of organisational change than those in the private sector across all our measures. This is consistent with other researchers who focus specifically on the public sector (see Diefenbach, 2009; Avis, 2005; Williams, 2004).

Table 2 Perception of the effect of organisational change by type of organisation

<i>Percentage saying change had a negative effect on...</i>	<i>Public sector</i>	<i>Private sector</i>
Loyalty to the organisation	69	48
Morale	86	55
Motivation	75	49
Sense of job security	83	54
Well-being	66	43

We are not against organisational change as organisations cannot be preserved in aspic or they will ossify, become less competitive and, ultimately, die. What we are against is poorly managed organisational change, and it is disconcerting to note that our respondents’ views of how well change is being managed by top management have deteriorated since 2007. In 2007, 45% thought that top management in their organisation was managing change well, but this declined to 30% in 2007. What we ask is that, when planning change, top management think more deeply about the effects of change on employees’ well-being, on their motivation, on their loyalty to the organisation and on the volume and pace of work that those affected by change will have to cope with. It is clear that too many directors have little understanding of the wider organisational costs and consequences of cost reduction, of redundancy, of delaying, of work intensification and the erosion of terms and conditions. If these organisational costs were better factored into directors’ decision-making, perhaps their decisions might change.

4 Managers’ views on their current organisation as a place to work and how it has changed

In the 2007 survey, we included a section that looked at how managers felt about their current organisation as a place to work. The questions were replicated in the 2012 survey. Since 2007, there has been a marked decline on several key measures:

- overall job satisfaction declined from 62% in 2007 to 55% in 2012;
- the percentage that thought that senior managers in their organisation were managing change well declined from 45 to 30%;

The effect of the recession on the quality of working life

- the percentage of those who thought that top managers in their organisation were committed to promoting employee well-being declined from 55 to 39%: this was the largest decline in any of our comparable measures and a decline that we consider to be of worrying proportions;
- the percentage of managers who felt that they were treated fairly by their organisation declined from 60% to 54%;
- the percentage of those who thought that their organisation was a good employer declined from 69% to 64%.

In summary, a comparison of the 2007 and the 2012 data reveals that many organisations have taken a step backwards on measures that are generally seen as desirable and indicative of good management practice: respondents felt less fairly treated; levels of mutual trust declined; managers' sense of empowerment declined and top managers were seen as less committed to promoting well-being and less favourably as effective managers of change. It is not surprising that job satisfaction declined especially for more junior managers (Robertson and Cooper, 2011).

The perceptual differences between directors and junior managers have persisted and have, in many cases, widened since 2007. For example, while 80% of directors (83% in 2007) were satisfied with their job, this declined to 46% for junior managers (53% in 2007). About 76% of directors were most likely to feel that their organisation treated them fairly, but this declined to 27% in case of junior managers. In 2007, the equivalent figures were 78% for directors and 49% for junior managers. Since 2007, there has been a significant erosion of job satisfaction among junior managers and a widening of the gap between junior managers and directors. While we would not expect junior and middle managers to achieve the same scores as directors on some of our measures, we are concerned that the gaps between those with the most power in the organisation and those with the least appear to be widening. While only 19% of directors would leave if they could find another job, this increased to 47% in case of junior managers. What is even more worrying is that only about a quarter of junior managers and a third of middle managers felt that top management in their organisation was committed to promoting employee well-being.

In the 2007 report, we pointed out that the quality of an employee's relationship with his/her line manager has a major effect on their job satisfaction, on their level of employee engagement and on their overall quality of working life. The 2012 survey shows that where respondents felt that their line manager was managing their work group well, 84% were satisfied with their job. Where respondents felt their line manager was doing a very poor job in managing their team, job satisfaction declined to 8%. Clearly, the strength of the association between how well someone 'gets on with' and has trust in their line manager and their job satisfaction is very significant (see Worrall et al., 2011). While the quality of the line manager relationship is clearly not the only thing to affect job satisfaction, it is certainly an influential determinant of job satisfaction. Consequently, in the 2007 and 2012 surveys, we included a series of questions to look at how well the relationship between respondents and their line managers was working and to see how it had changed over the period. Given the effect of the line manager relationship on key aspects of organisational well-being, such as job satisfaction and organisational engagement, it is disappointing that the scores on our measures have deteriorated since 2007. For example, respondents became less trusting of their line

manager and felt that their line manager was less likely to trust them. In 2007, 55% of respondents said that they trusted their line manager and that they thought that their line manager trusted them, while 7% said that they neither trusted their line manager nor felt that their line manager trusted them. By 2012, the position had deteriorated: 50% of respondents said that they trusted their line manager and thought that their line manager trusted them, and 10% said that they neither trusted their line manager nor thought that their line manager trusted them. Between 2007 and 2012, the level of reciprocal trust between respondents and their line managers declined and the level of reciprocal mistrust between respondents and their line managers showed a slight increase.

5 A picture of managers' health: changes from 2007 to 2012

An important element of the Quality of Working Life survey is the ability to monitor change in managers' physical and psychological health. In the 2007 survey and, again in 2012, we obtained managers' views about their physical and psychological health using two sets of questions. The first set asked managers about their experience of various common physical manifestations of ill health and whether their experience of ill health had resulted in them taking time off from work. In the second set of questions, we explored managers' views about some of the more emotional and psychological aspects of well-being, some of which were crucially important as they affected managers' behaviour at work and, in particular, their ability to do their jobs effectively (for example, managers were asked if they had suffered from constant irritability, feeling unable to cope, anxiety and having difficulty in concentrating).

While the relative incidence of these forms of ill health in 2012 is important, what is more important is how the incidence of these measures has changed over time. Of the 13 aspects of ill health that we examined in our surveys, managers reported worse scores in 2012 on 12 of our measures of physical ill health. The percentage of managers that reported having experienced symptoms of stress showed the greatest increase – from 35% in 2007 to 42% in 2012. We regard a seven percentage point increase in our stress measure as an issue of some concern. The percentage of managers experiencing symptoms of depression increased from 15% to 18%. The percentage of managers who had suffered from symptoms of stress and depression varied sharply in the organisational hierarchy. Directors were the least likely to report stress (32%) and depression (13%), while junior managers were the most likely to report stress (49%) and depression (28%).

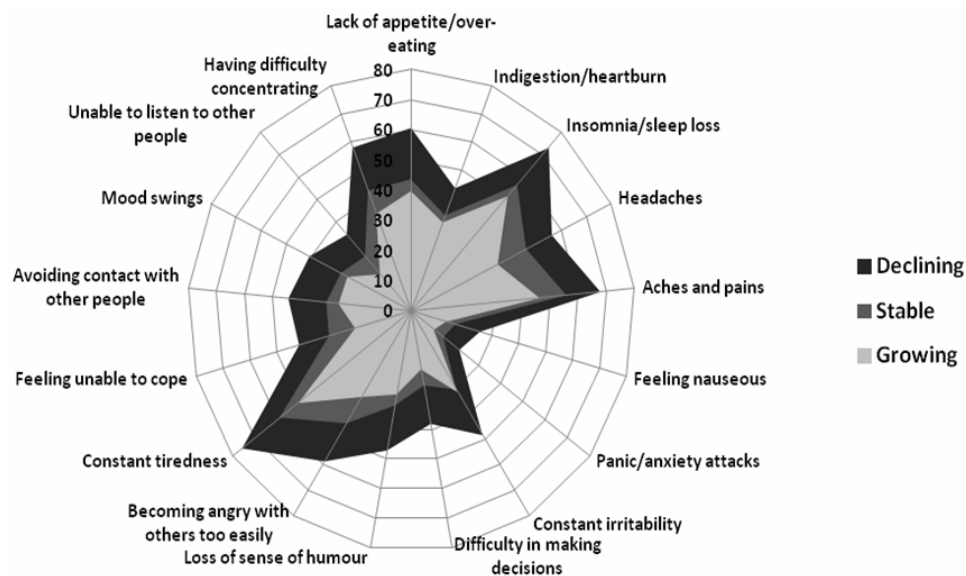
While 12 of our 13 measures of physical ill health declined, 15 of our 17 measures of psychological ill health declined. Of particular concern here was the decline in the measures that directly affected managers' ability to do their jobs well, such as constant tiredness, difficulty in making decisions and difficulty in concentrating. For example, the percentage of managers that reported avoiding contact with other people increased from 25% to 33% and the proportion that said that they had difficulty concentrating increased from 37% to 45%. Constant tiredness and insomnia/sleep loss remained persistently high, and both increased marginally from their 2007 levels.

An additional investigation theme in the 2012 report was to explore if managers' propensity to report aspects of psychological ill health varied with 'organisational health', i.e. whether the organisation was growing, stable or declining. In Figure 1, we reveal that managers' propensity to report that they had experienced aspects of

The effect of the recession on the quality of working life

psychological ill health did vary with the health of the organisation. Managers who were based in declining organisations were markedly more likely to report that they had experienced ill health than managers in growing organisations on all our measures.

Figure 1 Managers' psychological health and 'organisational health'



Our analysis of absence and ill health revealed an important issue: while the proportion of managers experiencing symptoms of ill health had increased since 2007, absence levels and managers' propensity to take time off from work had decreased. Our concern here is that 'presenteeism' and the tendency to 'soldier on' even when managers were unwell had become more prevalent since 2007, perhaps indicating the effects of the more difficult economic environment that organisations now have to cope with and managers' concerns that taking time off may undermine their future job security at a time when concerns over job insecurity had increased.

Directors were least likely to report symptoms of ill health on all of our measures and junior managers were most likely to report that they had sometimes or often experienced symptoms of ill health on all our measures. On a number of measures, the differences between directors and junior managers were wide and had widened: for example, while 18% of directors had had feelings of being unable to cope, this increased to 42% in case of junior managers, and while 46% of directors reported insomnia/sleep loss, this increased to 70% in case of junior managers. While the scores on all of our measures deteriorated for all managers between 2007 and 2012, the plight of junior managers deteriorated more noticeably. For example, the percentage of junior managers reporting mood swings increased from 33% to 43%; the percentage reporting sleep loss/insomnia increased from 57% to 70% and the proportion reporting constant tiredness increased from 68% to 78%.

Feeling able to cope in your job is critical both for your own sense of self-efficacy and for your ability to instil confidence in others. If managers feel unable to cope, they are unlikely to be able to do their job effectively. Additionally, feeling unable to

cope is often a classic indicator that there are systemic and structural failings within organisations. There was a clear gradation in feelings of being unable to cope by the hierarchy in the organisation, rising from directors (18%) to senior managers (26%) to middle managers (32%) to junior managers (42%). The important points that emerged from our analysis were that managers at the bottom of the organisational pyramid scored the lowest on all our measures and that their position had deteriorated relative to other levels of management since 2007.

A key finding of our 2012 report, when compared to our 2007 findings, was that while managers were increasingly likely to have reported aspects of physical and psychological ill health, they were less likely to have taken time off from work ill as absence rates and managers' propensity to take time off from work even when they were ill had declined. This infers that 'presenteeism' has increased. Consequently, we included a question that asked respondents if they felt that there was a culture of people not taking leave even if they were ill. In 2007, 32% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, but by 2012, this had increased to 43%, suggesting that presenteeism had, indeed, increased since 2007.

6 Work extensification: managers' working hours and their effect

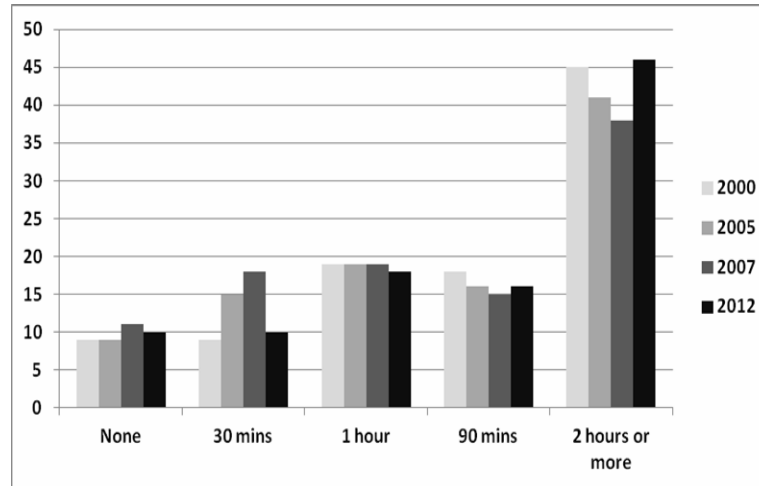
Work-life balance is an important issue that has major effects both in the workplace and outside the workplace. Inside the workplace, working too many hours is a driver of stress and physical and psychological ill health. Outside the workplace, working long hours has a profound impact on individuals: it reduces the time and energy they have available for leisure and recreation and also for developing and pursuing interests other than work. An adverse work-life balance also affects managers' families by undermining the quality of managers' relationships with their spouses and children. Feeling unable to control one's work-life balance is also a major stressor (Worrall and Cooper, 2007b).

In 2007 and 2012, 90% of managers who worked full time indicated that they regularly worked over their contract hours. Since we began collecting these data in 1997, the percentage of full-time managers who regularly worked over their contract hours has hardly changed, but the distribution of hours worked over the contract hours has changed. The distribution of additional working hours (measured here by the hours managers work in excess of their contracted hours on a daily basis) is shown in Figure 2.

Since 2007, the percentage of managers working over their contract hours has stayed roughly constant, but the distribution of hours worked over the contract hours has changed markedly. There has been a decline in the percentage of managers who worked 30 minutes per day over the contract hours (from 18% in 2007 to 10% in 2012), but there has been a noticeable increase in the percentage of managers who work two hours or more per day over their contract hours. In 2007, 38% of managers worked two hours or more per day over their contract hours, but by 2012 this had increased to 46%. We have calculated that the 'average manager' works around 1.5 hours per day over their contract hours. If this is translated into days per year, it equates to roughly 46 working days for the average manager (that is the equivalent of over nine weeks' 'free' work). The average manager took leaves of roughly 3.6 days per year in 2012 and, consequently, for every day the average manager took as sickness leave, he/she provided almost 13 days free of charge to his/her employer.

The effect of the recession on the quality of working life

Figure 2 Percentage of managers working over their contract hours, 2000–2012



There were marked differences in the percentage of managers working significantly over their contract hours by level in the organisational hierarchy: while 66% of directors worked two hours or more per day over their contract hours, this declined to 45% of senior managers, 40% of middle managers and 26% of junior managers. Not surprisingly, feeling overloaded was related to the number of hours managers had worked over their contract hours. Interestingly, 34% of managers who claimed to work over three hours per day over their contract hours said they did not feel overloaded. In earlier studies (Worrall and Cooper, 2007b), we found that managers' sense of feeling in control of the hours they worked was critical: where managers felt in control, they could work long hours and not feel adversely affected, but where managers felt that they had no control and were being driven by the volume of work they had to do, the impact on managers' well-being was much more likely to be physically and psychologically damaging.

Working long hours has a significant effect on many important aspects of managers' personal and social lives. Worryingly, over 50% of managers said that working long hours had a negative effect on their stress levels, on their psychological health and on their physical health. Women tended to be more concerned about the negative impact of working long hours than men. For example, while 55% of men felt that the hours they worked had had a negative impact on their stress levels, this increased to 65% in case of women. The same order of difference between men and women was also found on the psychological health measure (50% of men felt that working long hours had a negative effect compared to 64% of women) and on the physical health measure (where 52% for men felt working long hours had a negative effect compared to 63% of women).

For some groups of managers, the effects were much more extreme. Of the managers who worked three hours or more per day over the contract hours and were only doing so because of the pressure of work, 78% felt that the hours they worked had had a negative impact on their stress levels, 76% that it had had a negative effect on their physical health and 70% that it had had a negative effect on their psychological health. Given these adverse health and well-being effects, it is disturbing that the percentage of managers

who now feel they have to work very long hours over the contract hours has increased. Perhaps, they feel that they are being driven to work long hours by the economic circumstances that many businesses now find themselves in and by a heightened sense of job insecurity.

7 Conclusions

The 2012 survey has made bleak reading. More firms are in decline than in 2007. While some firms are growing, what growth there is in the private sector seems to be overshadowed by a considerable decline in the public sector. The nature of organisational change also seems to have mutated since we began these surveys in 1997, with cost reduction assuming an even higher prominence as a driver of change. Organisations and the people who work within them are being squeezed and put under pressure to work harder, to work longer and to work faster, with a significant proportion of, particularly, more junior managers feeling that they have less control over their jobs and less task discretion. We are very concerned about the effects of these changes.

After analysing the 2012 data, we have exposed a number of themes that pose some fundamental questions about how UK organisations are being managed:

- Managers are being put under more pressure as cost-cutting, redundancy and deteriorating terms and conditions take their physical and psychological toll.
- Managers have become less positive about their organisation as a place to work and measures of job satisfaction have declined.
- Managers are less of the opinion that their organisation cares about their well-being.
- More managers said their health was deteriorating rather than improving.
- Working hours have increased and managers are having to work even longer hours to cope with the volume of work and to meet deadlines.
- Illness levels have increased, but managers seem less likely to take time off from work even when they are ill. Consequently, we feel that presenteeism has increased as organisational attitudes to absence have hardened and workers are more concerned about the consequences of taking time off from work.
- The types of illness that have increased the most, such as feeling unable to cope, difficulty in making decisions and avoiding people, are the ones that tend to undermine managerial effectiveness.
- The difference in perceptions between managers at different levels in the hierarchy have become so marked as to be a cause for worry, and we are left feeling that many directors – suffused with their own rhetoric – have no idea what the reality of their organisation is like for people at lower levels of the hierarchy.
- The most prevalent management styles in the UK – authoritarian, bureaucratic and reactive – all have negative consequences for managers' health and well-being, employee engagement and employees' sense of empowerment.

The effect of the recession on the quality of working life

The impact of the post-2007 recession on the UK economy has been profound, and it has sent shock waves through many organisations in the UK. While we accept that responding to these shocks has been difficult for many top managers, we feel that top managers need to become far more adept at managing change if their organisations are to grow and prosper in the future. While cost reduction might be needed, it always has huge costs of its own and, in making restructuring decisions, top managers need to factor in the costs of lost productivity through employee ill-health, workforce alienation and losing the key skills that their organisations will need if they are to grow in the future. Top managers should be less optimistic about what they can realistically achieve without causing long-term, irreparable damage to their organisations. Senior decision makers should certainly do all they can to avoid serial waves of continuous change that only serve to disorientate and demotivate the workforce and ultimately undermine the cultural fabric of the organisation (Bowles and Cooper, 2009).

Top managers also need to be more self-aware and be more aware of how they are perceived within their organisations. While they may think their management styles are accessible, open, trusting and empowering, they might be the only persons in the organisation who think so. Many top managers recite the human resource manager's mantra of building employee engagement, but how many are aware that their lack of engagement with the reality of their organisations is the thing that does the most to prevent employees from becoming engaged?

Much of our argument focuses on top managers, but we feel that the engine for improving the quality of working life depends on having effective worker/line manager relationships. Top managers' role here is to create a supportive organisation culture in which middle and line managers can operate effectively. Having an effective line manager probably does more to affect your motivation, loyalty, commitment and, ultimately, your productivity than anything else in the organisation. Getting the organisational climate right, having top managers who are in tune with their organisations and developing skilled line managers are critical if you want to build an engaged and productive work force. It is difficult to get these things right if the organisation is in a state of perpetual flux.

From an academic perspective, our research poses significant questions about how change management and change management implementation are theorised. We concur with Todnem By (2005, p.369) who argued that the "theories and approaches to change management currently available to academics and practitioners are often contradictory, mostly lacking empirical evidence and supported by unchallenged hypotheses concerning the nature of contemporary organisational change management". More important, we are concerned that there is insufficient research into the (often unintended) impacts of organisational change. We are also concerned that there is insufficient research into the effects of the interaction between different forms of change acting in parallel as waves of successive change sweep over the organisation. While Parker's (2002) book *Against Management* sought to "bury management, not to praise it" (p.10), we think that the academic research agenda should be better focused on improving management, not burying it. We hope that our empirical analysis of the effect of the recession on UK managers' health and well-being stimulates practitioner and academic discussion about the need to manage change in a more effective and less damaging way.

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Appendix A: Methodology

The fieldwork for the study was conducted in May 2012. As in all previous studies, the Chartered Management Institute's (CMI) membership database was used as a sampling frame. A self-completion questionnaire was designed and emailed to 20,000 members of the institute. In 2012, the project generated 1334 responses (1560 in 2007; 1541 in 2005; 1516 in 2000; 1213 in 1999; 1313 in 1998; 1362 in 1997). In 2012, a response rate of 6.7% was achieved (15% in 2007 and 2005; 30% in 2000; 24% in 1999; 26% in 1998; 27% in 1997).

The 2005, 2007 and 2012 surveys were conducted completely over the internet, while the 1997–2000 surveys were 'post out–post back' surveys. This change of mode may explain why response rates differed substantially between the 1997–2001 surveys and the 2005 and 2007 surveys.

As in previous reports, we emphasise that our sample reflects the structure of the membership of the CMI. Within the institute, more senior levels of management are over-represented compared to UK businesses as whole.

A comparison of the 2007 and 2012 data by respondents' level in the organisation revealed some differences in the structure of the two samples. As responses on many of our measures varied strongly with respondents' level in the organisation, a decision was taken to weight the 2012 data so that it reflected the structure of the 2007 survey.

Almost 70% of respondents were males and 30% were females (65% and 35%, respectively, in 2007).

Respondents were asked to indicate which type of organisation they worked within. In 2012, 11% were in the charity/not for profit sector, 42% worked in the public sector and 48% worked in the private sector. The equivalent figures for 2007 were 12%, 38% and 49%.